

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

One aspect of the invention provides a method performed by the control unit for controlling external electronic systems coupled to a LAN. One embodiment of the method includes receiving a first signal from a first subscriber station. Responsive to the first signal, the method forwards a tagged subscriber station message to the first subscriber station . The tagged subscriber station message is applicable to the subscriber interface of the first subscriber station. The method receives a second signal from the first subscriber station based at least in part on the tagged subscriber station message. The method forwards a tagged external system message that includes a control command to at least one external system based at least in part on the second signal from the first subscriber station. After forwarding a tagged external system message to the at least one external system, the method can further include receiving a tagged external system message that includes status information back from the at least one external system

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